

VZCZCXR06159
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH
DE RUEHBD #0139 1270835
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 060835Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4213
RUEHPNH/NVC PORTSMOUTH 0038
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEAORC/USCBP WASHINGTON DC
RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000139

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR CA/VO, CA/FPP AND INL/HSTC
DEPARTMENT PASS KCC
POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CPAS CVIS KFRD CMGT ASEC BX
SUBJECT: Brunei Issues Biometric Passport

REF: A) Bandar Seri Begawan 133
B) Friedman-Rupp e-mail 5/5/08
C) 07 Bandar Seri Begawan 69

SUMMARY and ACTION REQUEST

¶1. (SBU) On May 5, the Government of Brunei (GoB) began issuing ICAO-compliant biometric passports. Post requests Department clearance to issue the press release in paragraph 4 and update our web information for Brunei citizens seeking visa waiver travel to the U.S. END SUMMARY and ACTION REQUEST.

COUNTRY CONDITIONS

¶2. (U) On May 5, the GoB announced the official launch of its biometric passport program. In his public remarks, Minister of Home Affairs Pehin Adanan Hj Mohd Yusof reportedly stated that the new passport will allow Brunei citizens to enjoy visa waiver travel to the U.S. Post has already received media inquiries about the impact of the issuance of the new passports on the Visa Waiver Program.

¶3. (U) Although post has yet to receive our exemplars of the new passport, we have been assured by our Immigration Department that the new passports are fully compliant with ICAO standards for biometric passports. According to press reports, the new passport produced by the German firm Giesecke & Devrient (G&D) incorporates the standard 72-kbyte encrypted RFID chip which will contain biodata, photo, and 10-print fingerprints. Other security features include digitized photograph, rainbow fluorescent security threads, microprinting, and a polycarbonate security laminate on the data page. The new passports will be issued with five years' validity and will have a unique serial number - a break from Brunei's past practice of using the holder's unique national identity card number as the passport number. This past practice meant that replacement passports for lost, stolen, or just expired passports were issued with the same number as the old passport.

¶4. (SBU) Post would like to issue the following press release to educate the public about the impact of the new passports on the visa waiver program.

BEGIN DRAFT PRESS RELEASE and WEB POSTING:

The Embassy of the United States congratulates His Majesty's Government on the announcement that it has begun issuing ICAO compliant biometric passports.

The United States' Visa Waiver Program (VWP) allows Bruneian passport holders to enter the United States without the requirement

of a visa as long as they meet certain criteria. Brunei continues to participate in the Visa Waiver Program, along with a select few other countries.

Holders of Brunei's new biometric passports are eligible to apply for entry to the U.S. as temporary visitors for business or pleasure without a visa. Holders of a non-biometric, machine-readable passport issued, renewed or extended on or after October 26, 2006, must apply for a U.S. visa before they travel to the U.S. This is a requirement for all VWP travelers worldwide. Holders of non-biometric, machine-readable passports issued, renewed or extended before October 26, 2006 may still use this passport to participate in the Visa Waiver Program.

If you have any questions on this new requirement or require clarification on whether this requirement will affect your travel plans, please contact the American Embassy Consular Section at 222-0384. Additional information on the Visa Waiver Program may also be found at www.travel.state.gov. Thank you.

END DRAFT PRESS RELEASE and WEB POSTING.

SKODON